

Jim Rempp

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Medium: wood and sinew

About the Artist:

Jim Rempp, bowmaker from Missoula, was born in Yerington, NV, where he was raised in a hunting and woodworking family. At five, he accompanied his father in the field, learning to hunt rabbits and deer and prep their skins. He also spent time with his dad in the shop, learning about wood. He had an early fascination with archery which spurred his desire to make his own bows. He spent many hours trying to build functional bows that would shoot straight and not self-destruct. However, with no mentors, he failed and put his bow-making dream aside.

As a teenager, Rempp moved with his family to Hawaii. There he carved his own surfboards, becoming one of the first to carve a short board when nearly all surfboards were long boards. His love of wood led him to apprentice for four years under the rigorous Japanese apprentice system. Besides being influenced by the Japanese sense of beauty, simplicity, functionality, he learned about various woods and how to use those properties to insure the wood performed.

About the Art:

In 1980, Rempp moved to Montana and met Ted Kramer, who became Rempp's mentor. Rempp learned about the unique properties of yew, the wood of choice for centuries of bowmaking. Since then, Rempp has built well over 1,000 bows. Many people, once they shoot a Rempp bow, want one. His bows have been sold to collectors and only displayed, even though every bow he makes is designed to shoot straight and smoothly. In addition to yew, Rempp uses a variety of woods, including Osage, juniper, serviceberry, and vine maple. He also sources for himself many of the other materials used in his bows, including sinew, snakeskin, bone, antlers, and horn.

Rempp takes particular pride in helping new bowmakers get started in the craft. He has a sense of obligation to the craft and works hard to pass his insights and skills on to the next generation. He attends five to ten archery events each year, most of which are up to three days long. His area at each of these shows is crowded all day long with 20 or more people watching

and listening to him explain how to make a strong and true shooting bow. He also shows people how they can use their creativity to make their bows more beautiful.

Photography by: Marti DeAlva and Chris Autio